

# Wilsonville-Beaverton Commuter Rail

Washington County, Oregon  
(November 2002)

## Description

Washington County, Oregon, in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet), Portland Metro (Metro), Clackamas County, and the cities of Wilsonville, Tualatin, Tigard and Beaverton, are proposing to design and construct a 14.7-mile commuter rail line in the Wilsonville-Beaverton Corridor. The proposed project would operate along portions of existing Union-Pacific railroad tracks and connect to Metro's existing Westside light rail system at the Beaverton Transit Center (BTC). As part of the proposed project, approximately 2,000 feet of new railroad trackage will be constructed at the northern terminus of the alignment near the BTC. The proposed project also includes the purchase of eight passenger rail cars, the construction of vehicle maintenance and dispatch facilities and multiple capital improvements. The proposed commuter rail project is estimated to have 4,650 average weekday boardings.

Summary Description	
<b>Proposed Project:</b>	Commuter Rail 14.7 Miles, 5 Stations
<b>Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):</b>	\$120 Million
<b>Section 5309 New Starts Share (\$YOE):</b>	\$72 Million (60%)
<b>Annual Operating Cost (2022 \$YOE):</b>	\$4.1 Million
<b>Ridership Forecast (2020):</b>	4,650 Average Weekday Boardings 2,600 Daily New Riders
<b>Opening Year Ridership Forecast (2005):</b>	2,410 Average Weekday Boardings
<b>FY 2004 Finance Rating:</b>	Medium
<b>FY 2004 Project Justification Rating:</b>	Not Yet Available
<b>FY 2004 Overall Project Rating:</b>	Not Yet Available

The Wilsonville-Beaverton Corridor extends from the City of Wilsonville northwest to Beaverton, Oregon. The northern portion of the corridor is owned by the Union-Pacific railroad, while the southern portion is owned by ODOT. The corridor will connect the two cities with several outlying jurisdictions. Five commuter rail stations are planned along the alignment. All proposed stations, with the exception of the BTC station, will have park-and-ride facilities.

Washington County seeks to develop a more diverse and balanced transportation system, specifically by providing another transit option for commuters in the Wilsonville-to-Beaverton corridor. The project will better link regional centers, town centers and employment areas and to capitalize on the public investment in the existing light rail system.

The project rating is *Not Yet Available* because the transportation system user benefit measure used for cost effectiveness and mobility improvements was not submitted. Consequently, project justification could not be rated. In spring 2002, the project changed from exempt to non-exempt status because of a higher proposed New Starts funding amount and share. FTA continues to work with the project sponsor to develop this measure. FTA will rate the project and make that information available to Congress and other interested parties when the analysis is complete.

The overall project rating applies to this *Annual Report on New Starts* and **reflects conditions as of November 2002**. Project evaluation is an ongoing process. As New Starts projects proceed through development, the estimates of costs, benefits, schedules, and impacts are refined. **The FTA ratings and recommendations will be updated annually to reflect new information, changing conditions and refined financing plans.**

The Administration is seeking legislation that would limit the Federal New Starts share to no more than 50 percent beginning in FY2004. Future ratings of this project would be affected by that change.

## Status

In May 1997, Phase I of the *Washington County Interurban Rail Feasibility Study* was completed. The study determined that there were no technical, regulatory or legal issues that would prevent the implementation of a commuter rail line in the Wilsonville-Beaverton Corridor. Phase I resulted in the Oregon Legislature's approval to fund the initiation of a Phase II study to determine if the use of existing Union-Pacific freight railroad trackage offered a transportation solution significant enough to warrant the required capital and operating cost investments. Phase II was commissioned by interested jurisdictions located in the eastern portion of Washington County and was completed in April 1999. In June 2000, the Washington County Board of Commissioners unanimously adopted commuter rail as the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the corridor. The affected local governments also passed resolutions adopting the LPA. The project is also supported by the Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation (JPACT) as one of its regional transportation priorities for seeking Federal funding in 2000.

The project was adopted into the long range transportation plan in June 1999. FTA approved Washington County's request to enter Preliminary Engineering on the project in July 2000. In July 2000, FTA authorized publication of the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA). In August 2000, the Metro Council adopted the financially constrained regional transportation plan, which includes the Wilsonville-Beaverton commuter rail project. TriMet will operate the commuter rail.

The Wilsonville-Beaverton commuter rail project was not authorized in TEA-21, however, the authorization was amended in the FY2002 appropriations to include the Wilsonville-Beaverton Commuter Rail. Through FY2002, Congress has appropriated \$11.0 million in Section 5309 New Starts funds to the project.

TriMet has submitted a request to enter Final Design. FTA is reviewing the request and will complete its evaluation after it receives the Transportation System User Benefit measure.

Project Justification Quantitative Criteria		
Mobility Improvements Rating: Not Yet Available		
Average Employment Per Station	New Start vs. Baseline	
Average Low Income Households Per Station	7,234	
Transportation System User Benefit Per Project Passenger Mile (Minutes)	62	
	Not Yet Available	
Environmental Benefits Rating: Medium		
Criteria Pollutant Reduced (tons)	New Start vs. Baseline	
Carbon Monoxide (CO)	84	
Nitrogen Oxide (NO <sub>x</sub> )	8	
Hydrocarbons	10	
Particulate Matter (PM <sub>10</sub> )	Not Yet Available	
Carbon Dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> )	2,966	
Annual Energy Savings (million)		
BTU	38,553	
Cost Effectiveness Rating: Not Yet Available		
	New Start vs. Baseline	
Cost per Transportation System User Benefit (current year dollars/hour)	Not Yet Available	
Operating Efficiencies Rating: Medium		
	Baseline	New Start
System Operating Cost per Passenger Mile (current year dollars)	\$0.44	\$0.44

[ ] indicates an increase in emissions.

## Evaluation

The following criteria have been estimated in conformance with FTA's *Reporting Instructions for the Section 5309 New Starts Criteria*, updated in June 2002. FTA is reviewing the proposed use of the TSM alternative as the New Starts baseline for evaluation and rating purposes. The project will be evaluated for next year's *Annual Report on New Starts*.

## **Project Justification**

### **Rating: Not Yet Available**

The project justification rating is *Not Yet Available* because the transportation system user benefit measure used for cost effectiveness and mobility improvements was not submitted. Consequently, project justification could not be rated. In spring 2002, the project changed from exempt to non-exempt status because of a higher proposed New Starts funding amount and share. FTA continues to work with the project sponsor to develop the measure for cost effectiveness. FTA will rate the project and make that information available to Congress and other interested parties when the analysis is complete.

Based on 1990 Census data, there are an estimated 310 low-income households within a ½-mile radius of the proposed stations, representing 7.2 percent of all households located within ½-mile of the stations. There are an estimated 36,168 jobs within a ½-mile radius of the proposed stations. The Portland region is classified as a “maintenance area” for carbon monoxide and ozone. The project has an incremental cost-per incremental trip value of \$15.77.

## **Existing Land Use, Transit-Supportive Land Use Policies and Future Patterns**

### **Rating: Medium-High**

The *Medium-High* rating reflects the relatively low station area population densities and employment served by the proposed transit project, but acknowledges the strong growth management and transit-supportive planning activities that have been undertaken in the Portland metropolitan region.

**Existing Conditions:** The project uses a portion of an active freight rail line between Wilsonville and Beaverton that traverses areas of low- to moderate-density commercial, industrial, and residential development in Washington County. Existing pedestrian-oriented character is good for a suburban rail line since three of the five stations are in older downtown areas with a mix of uses. Outside of these areas, though, development is more typical of suburban areas, with segregated residential, commercial, and industrial uses. Total employment and population served are relatively small (28,000 jobs and 11,000 residents, with an average residential density of 2,700 persons per square mile in station areas). Off-street parking is plentiful. At the Beaverton Transit Center, the project links with Metro’s existing light rail line to connect its riders with Hillsboro, downtown Portland, Gresham, and, with an additional transfer, the Portland International Airport.

**Future Plans Policies and Performance:** Oregon in general, and the Portland metropolitan region in particular, have a long history of planning ahead to manage the effects of growth and to protect open space from rapid, low-density development. Numerous enforceable state, regional, and local plans and policies strongly emphasize corridor and station area development and transit-friendly or pedestrian-oriented design. Beaverton, Tigard, Tualatin, and Wilsonville are within the Portland metropolitan urban growth boundary. As such they fall under the jurisdiction of Metro, whose primary mission is growth management. The *Region 2040 Growth Concept* and the *Transportation Planning Rule* require local jurisdictions to adopt zoning ordinances that provide for transit-supportive densities in light rail station areas and along transit corridors. All

of the jurisdictions in the commuter rail corridor have updated their comprehensive plans and are implementing ordinances in order to comply. Zoning in most station areas is consistent with established targets of 40 to 60 persons per acre. Four of the five commuter rail stations will be located within areas already designated as pedestrian districts in the *Regional Transportation Plan* and/or local plans, and funding has been targeted for pedestrian improvements. Minimum and maximum parking requirements in the station areas are consistent with the *Transportation Planning Rule* and lower than those generally found in suburban areas. The Transit-Oriented Development Program at Metro provides a mechanism to support transit-oriented development activities throughout the region. Oregon has adopted tax abatement legislation that allows local jurisdictions to adopt ordinances that provide tax abatement for transit-supportive developments, and these have been applied in existing LRT station areas. Two major mixed-use redevelopment projects have been proposed in station areas.

## Local Financial Commitment

### **Rating: Medium**

The *Medium* local financial commitment rating was determined by the *Medium* rating for the capital financing plan and the *Medium* rating for the operating financing plan.

### **Proposed Non-Section 5309 New Starts Share of Total Project Costs: 40%**

### **Rating: Medium**

The project's financial plan includes Section 5309 New Starts funding and local funding.

<b>Locally Proposed Financial Plan</b>		
<b><u>Proposed Source of Funds</u></b>	<b><u>Total Funding (\$million)</u></b>	<b><u>Percent of Total</u></b>
<b>Federal:</b> Section 5309 New Starts	\$72.0	60.0 %
<b>State:</b> Lottery Revenue Bonds	\$35.0	29.2 %
<b>Local:</b> Washington Co. Gen. Funds	\$13.0	10.8 %
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$120.0</b>	100.0 %

**NOTE:** Funding proposal reflects assumptions made by project sponsors, and are not DOT or FTA assumptions. Total may not add due to rounding.

## **Stability and Reliability of Capital Financing Plan**

### **Rating: Medium**

The *Medium* capital plan rating reflects the high quality of the local funding commitment (100 percent of funds are committed), and adequacy of all other components of the capital plan.

**Agency Capital Financial Condition:** TriMet demonstrates a solid financial condition regarding its capital base. It has received bond ratings of AA+ by Standard & Poor's and Aa1 by Moody's. The average age of the rail fleet is eight years and the average age of the bus fleet is 8.2 years.

**Capital Cost Estimate and Contingencies:** TriMet has sufficient capital resources to construct the project and continue to carry out other projects in their Capital Improvement Program. The project contingency of 10.5 percent is relatively low for a project that has completed Preliminary Engineering.

**Existing and Committed Funding:** All of the \$48 million in proposed non-Section 5309 funds are existing and committed. This includes \$35 million of lottery-backed revenue bonds and \$13 million of Washington County General Funds.

**New and Proposed Sources:** TriMet does not propose any new funding sources.

## **Stability and Reliability of Operating Finance Plan**

### **Rating: Medium**

The *Medium* operating rating reflects the detailed historical data and a reasonable level of detail for future bus and light rail operations. Little operating data, however, are provided for the project and no information is provided about the level of service to be operated or the anticipated spare ratio for the rail fleet.

**Agency Operating Financial Condition:** TriMet is in good operating condition. It has steadily expanded its service and at the close of FY2002 (June 2002), its current ratio of capital to debt was 1.4. There have been no service cutbacks.

**Operating Cost Estimates and Contingencies:** The commuter rail project will likely have an insignificant effect on TriMet operations. In its first full year of operation, the project will account for 1.4 percent of system-wide operating costs, and will generate less than one percent of system-wide passenger revenue. The operating cost estimate for the project may be understated, however. TriMet has very limited capacity to fund additional costs – it is projecting a general fund deficit through FY2007. Although the deficit would be funded from existing cash reserves, a slower than anticipated economic recovery could cause TriMet difficulty in funding its share of the project's operating deficit.

**Existing and Committed Funding:** All sources of the \$4.3 million annual operating funds for the project, which include passenger fares, the Washington County General Fund, and the TriMet

payroll tax, are committed. The Washington County General Fund will finance 53.5 percent and TriMet payroll tax revenues will finance 31.1 percent of operating and maintenance costs.

The Washington County contribution to operating and maintenance costs is a component of the June 2002 Memorandum of Agreement between the County and TriMet. These contributions will terminate in FY2011. The following year, TriMet will apply Section 5309 Rail Modernization funds to the project's operating and maintenance costs, and will increase its contribution from payroll tax revenues.

**New and Proposed Funding Sources:** Passenger fares are projected to fund 15.3 percent of the operating and maintenance costs.

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